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ABSTRACT

This instructional packet, designed to help students as they prepare for the job search, is the first component of "The Employer's Choice," a research-based, multimedia set of instructional materials designed to prepare students for job market success. ("The Employer's Choice" is part of the "Connections" package, which represents a synthesis of significant work on education and employment and presents a coordinated set of resources to assist school administrators, counselors, teachers, and employers in helping students in their school and work transitions.) This instructional package uses data from employer questionnaires to illustrate how employers are influenced to hire and retain workers. Through selected activities, students are led to develop a realistic view of employer standards and to make plans for acquiring the skills employers want. There are seven chapters organized in three sections in this package. Each chapter contains an objective, overview, reference to worksheets, and information sheets illustrated with line drawings. The three sections cover the following topics: (1) What counts toward getting hired? (2) What leads to getting fired? and (3) How can you meet employers' standards? (KC)

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The Employer's Choice

Priorities That Count

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To the Student

The Employer's Choice: Priorities That Count is designed to help you as you prepare for the job search. It is the first component of *The Employer's Choice* materials:

- *The Employer's Choice: Priorities That Count*
- *The Employer's Choice: The Job Search*
- *The Employer's Choice: On the Job*

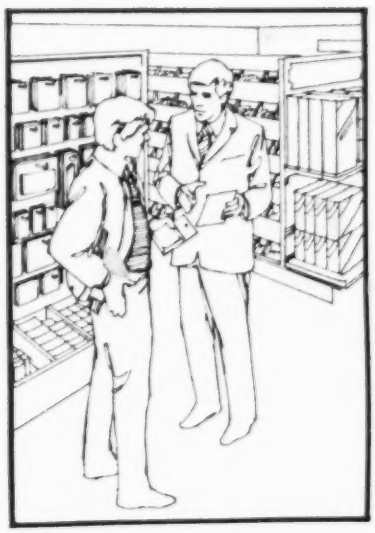
How Do You Think Employers React?

What are employers' reactions . . .

to the things people say during an interview?

to the things people do during an interview?

to the things people say and do on the job?



Now you can find out! The information presented in this guide is based on a survey of over 500 employers. The employers in the surveywere given a questionnaire that listed many different characteristics of job applicants and employees. The employers were asked how they would be influenced by these characteristics. Would they hire people with these characteristics or not? How would they feel about current employees who had such characteristics? What *are* their standards?

The results of the survey were interesting and somewhat surprising. This guide is based on those results. It does not deal with different ideas about what employers *should think* or *probably think*. It deals with the facts about what employers *actually do think* when they are assessing applicants and employees.

Why Do You Need to Know How Employers React?

Knowing the real facts about employers' standards can give you a decided advantage in the job market. With this information, you will know how you can make the best possible impression on employers: you will know what does impress them and what does not. And by approaching your job search with a realistic view of employers' standards, you will improve *your* chances of becoming the employer's choice.

How Can You Get the Real Facts about Employers' Standards?

The information in this guide is designed to help you get the real facts. The first two sections lead you to explore two questions about employers' standards:

- What counts toward getting hired?
- What leads to getting fired?

As you follow the lesson activities in these sections, you will—

- complete the same questionnaire that employers completed,
- compare your responses with employer responses,
- judge the accuracy of your perceptions, and
- adjust your perceptions of the characteristics that employers want *most*—or not at all—in a job applicant or employee.

Once your perceptions are in agreement with employer perceptions, you will have that decided advantage in the job market.

What Can You Do to Meet Employers' Standards?

The third section of this guide will help you answer that question. It will lead you to—

- examine your strengths and weaknesses,
- determine what you can do to improve your skills in the areas that matter most to employers, and
- plan how you can acquire the skills that employers are seeking.

Who Can Help You?

Your instructor will help you as you proceed through this guide. If you have any questions about the materials or instructions, be sure to ask. You may find the discussion sessions of particular value; through them, you and other students can gain a better perspective on employers' standards and expectations.

How Will You Benefit from This Guide?

As you complete the activities, you will recognize that you already have some of the personal qualities and characteristics that employers want. You may be encouraged to find that although employers take note of undesirable qualities, applicants can balance the scales to some extent with more desirable qualities. You will also see how, in the world of work, too many negative qualities usually result in unemployment.

How Should You Begin?

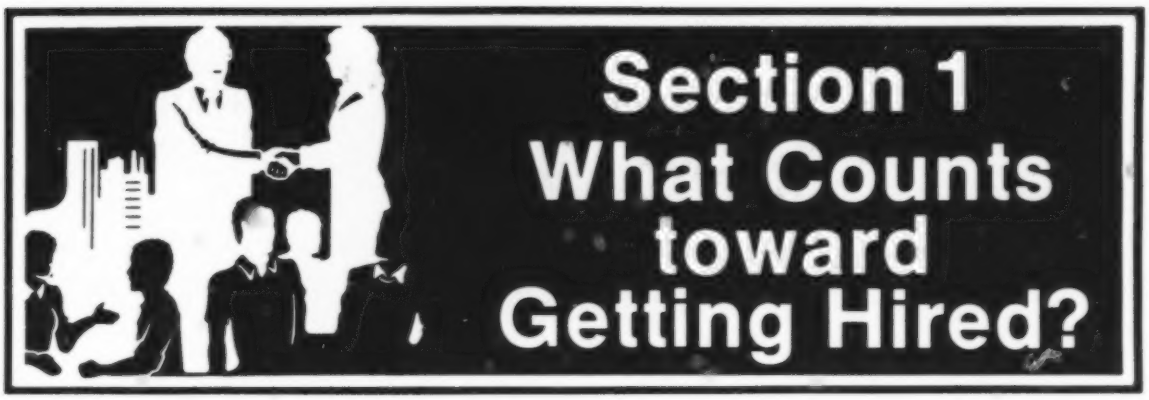
Turn to the first section, "What Counts toward Getting Hired?" The first chapter in that section is "What Is the Effect of Positive Information?" Introducing each chapter is a box of the information you will need to teach the lesson. This information includes the following:

Objective: This statement explains what you should be able to do after completing the lesson.

Overview: This paragraph describes what you will do in the lesson.

Worksheets: This list notes the printed worksheets that you will need for the lesson activities.

Read this information for each lesson and then proceed with the activities.

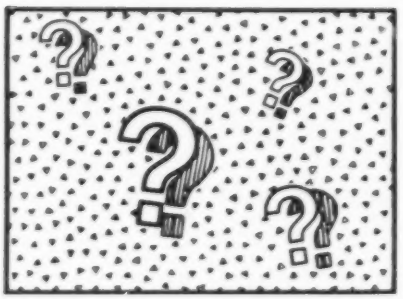


Section 1 What Counts toward Getting Hired?

Chapter 1
What is the Effect of Positive Information?

Objective	To determine how well you know the effect positive information has on employers' decisions to hire.
Overview	In this lesson, you will complete Worksheet 1, Getting a Job, Part A of the employer questionnaire. By doing this, you will indicate how you think employers respond to positive information. Next, you will compare your responses to the responses employers gave. Finally, you will assess your ability to estimate employers' expectations of applicants.
Worksheets	Worksheet 1, Getting a Job, Part A of the questionnaire. Worksheet 2, Employer Ratings of Positive Information.

What's Your Guess?

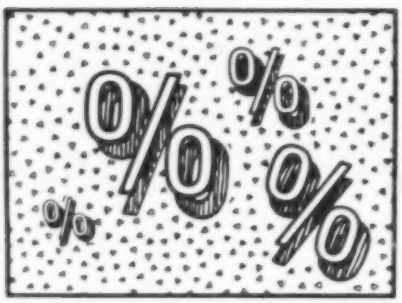


To begin this review, you will need to complete Worksheet 1, Getting a Job, Part A of the questionnaire. Part A contains a list of positive information about the job applicant. It is the same list that was given to the employers in the survey.

Get Worksheet 1 from your instructor. Read the directions. They explain that you are to mark how you think each item on the list will influence employers.

Complete the questionnaire before you continue reading.

What Do Employers Think?



Get the Worksheet 2, Employer Ratings of Positive Information, from your instructor. Read how employers responded to the same questionnaire. The numbers in each column show the percentage of employers who chose each response for each item listed. The percentage enclosed in the box is the response category *most* of the employers chose for the given item. For example, 48 percent of the employers said they were "positively" influenced to hire a person who "filled out the application in a neat and correct manner" (item 1).

Find the percentages that are most surprising to you. For example, are you surprised to find that *only 1 percent* of employers were *not* impressed with the applicant who looked clean and neat at the interview . . . or that *55 percent* of the employers were "very positively" impressed by this characteristic?

How Close Are You?

Are you tuned in to employers' thoughts? To find out, do the following:

1. Place Worksheet 1, Part A of your completed questionnaire, alongside Worksheet 2, showing employers' ratings.
2. Look at the category you checked for each item on Worksheet 1.
3. Find the employer percentage for each item in the column for the same category on Worksheet 2.
4. On Worksheet 2, circle the percentage in the category you checked on Worksheet 1. See the example below. It shows how you would complete item 1 if you had checked "positively" for that item on your questionnaire.

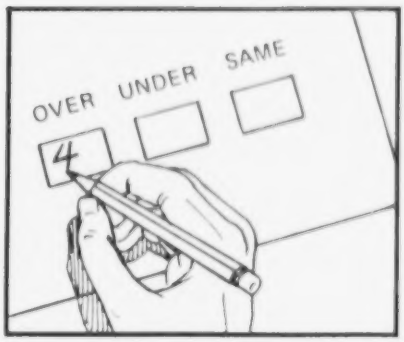
Item	Not at All	Somewhat Positively	Positively	Very Positively
Filled out the application in a neat and correct manner.	1%	22%	(48%)	29% ___

When you have circled the percentage in the corresponding category for each item, do the following on Worksheet 2:

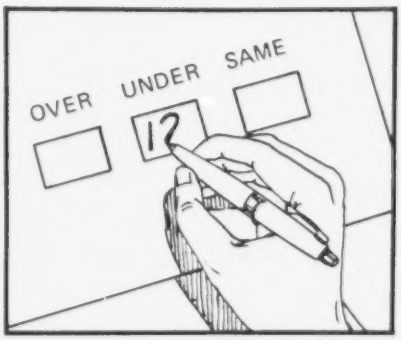
1. Find each item where your circled number was to the right of the boxed number. Place a check (✓) in the blank after that item.
2. Find each item where your circled number was to the left of the boxed number. Place an "X" on the blank after that item.
3. Find each item where your circled number was the same as the boxed number. Print an "O" on the blank after that item.

Now . . .

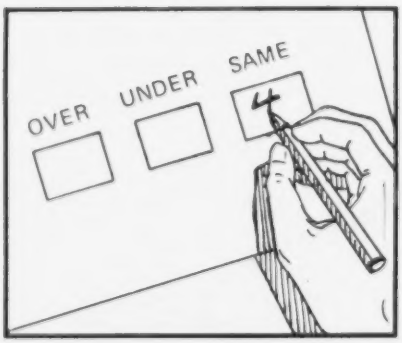
Count the number of times your circled numbers were to the right of the boxed numbers on Worksheet 2. These are the items with a check (✓). Write that number in the OVER box on the worksheet. This is the number of times you *overestimated* the influence of positive information.



Count the number of times your circled numbers were to the left of the boxed numbers on Worksheet 2. These are the items with an "X." Write that number in the UNDER box on the worksheet. This is the number of times you *underestimated* the influences of positive information.



Count the number of times your circled numbers were the same as the employers' boxed numbers on Worksheet 2. These are the items with an "O." Write that number in the SAME box on the worksheet. This is the number of times you *correctly perceived* employers' standards.

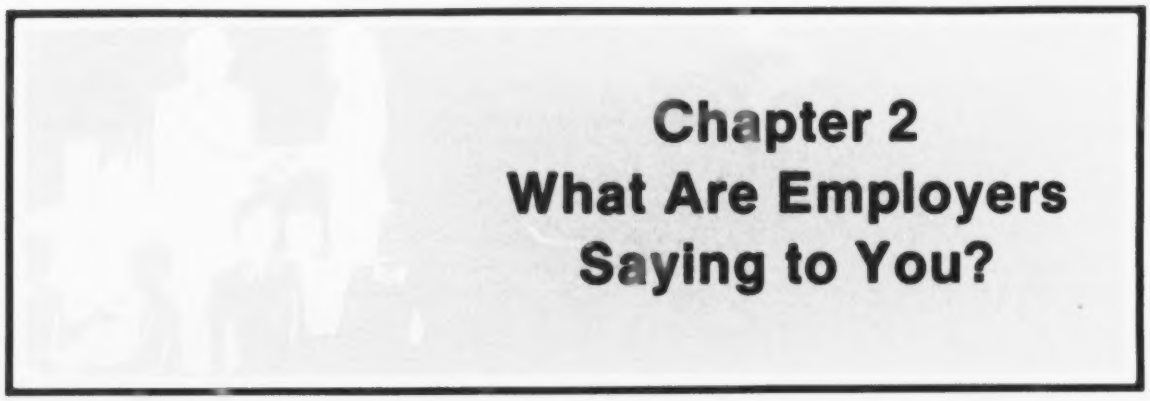


What Does This Mean?

Is the number you wrote in the OVER box greater than three? If so, you believe that positive information greatly influences employers' decisions to hire. However, you are probably overestimating its influence. Overestimating could affect your chances for getting hired. It could mean that you think employers are easily impressed.

Is the numer you wrote in the UNDER box greater than three? If so, you probably don't realize how much you can influence an employer to hire you. You should be more positive in your approach to a job search.

Is the number you wrote in the SAME box greater than seven? If so, you probably have a good idea of how much employers are influenced by positive information.



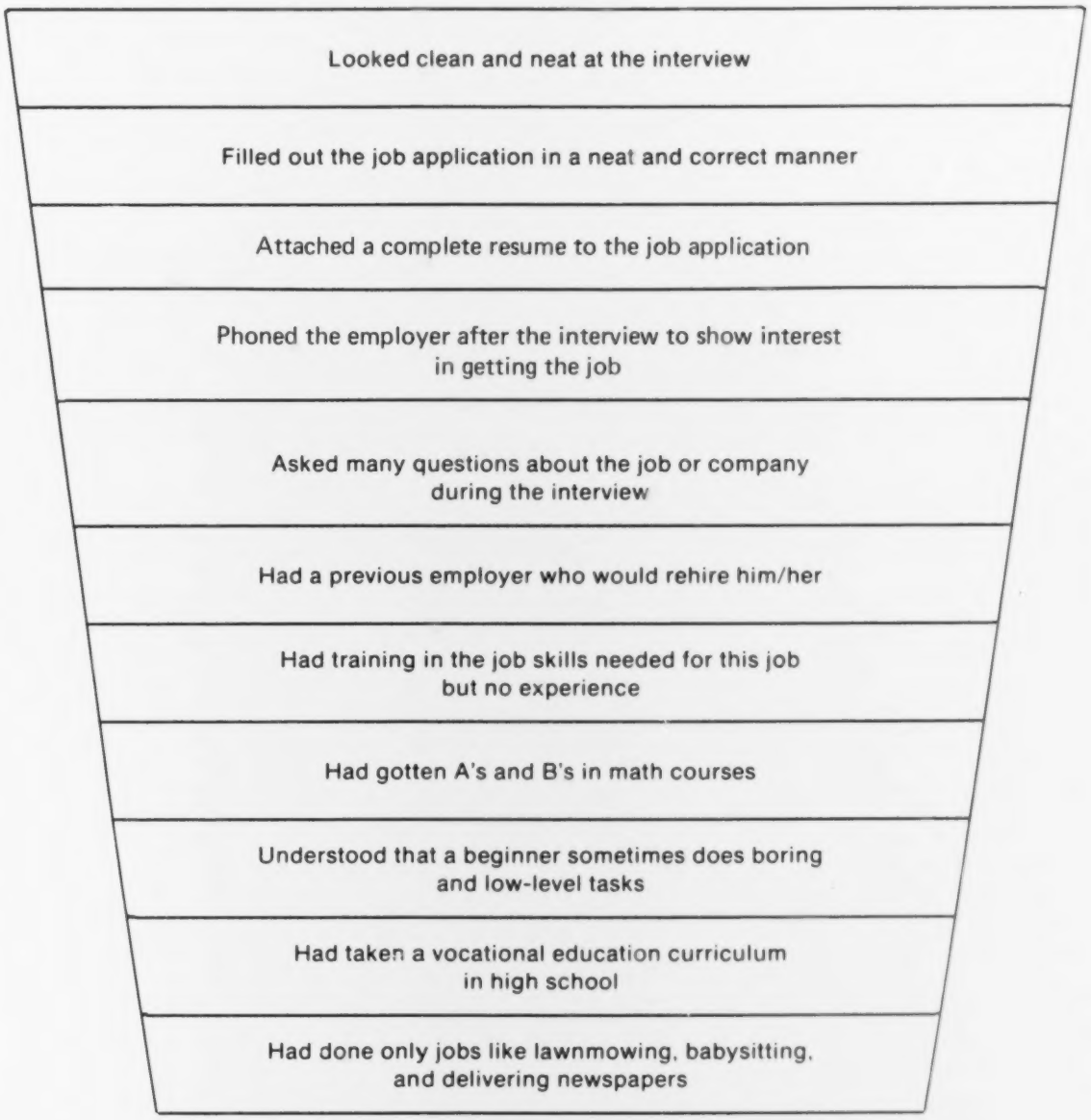
Chapter 2
What Are Employers Saying to You?

Objective	To identify characteristics employers seek in job applicants and ways applicants can reveal those characteristics during the job search.
Overview	In this lesson, you will review a chart that shows the order in which employers ranked the items on the questionnaire. The items that employers ranked most positively are at the top of the chart. Then you will read an explanation of why employers responded as they did to the items on the questionnaire. Next, you will engage in a class discussion of the employers' rankings and of the characteristics employers are looking for in the people they hire. You will also discuss ways in which applicants can convey information that will have a positive effect on employers.
Worksheet	Worksheet 3, What Employers Want.

On the Positive Side

The following chart shows the order in which employers ranked the positive effect of the information presented to them. As you read, remember that all this information had a positive effect on employers. The average rankings of all employers ranged from "very positively" to "somewhat positively."

(Very Positively)


Looked clean and neat at the interview
Filled out the job application in a neat and correct manner
Attached a complete resume to the job application
Phoned the employer after the interview to show interest in getting the job
Asked many questions about the job or company during the interview
Had a previous employer who would rehire him/her
Had training in the job skills needed for this job but no experience
Had gotten A's and B's in math courses
Understood that a beginner sometimes does boring and low-level tasks
Had taken a vocational education curriculum in high school
Had done only jobs like lawnmowing, babysitting, and delivering newspapers

(Somewhat Positively)

Employers Say . . .

Look at the top three items on the chart—the items employers responded to most positively. These items reflect how a person looks and behaves at the time of the application and interview. They are job search skills that anyone can have. They are skills that give employers their first impression of you.

First impression counts. Everything you do—or don't do—sends signals to employers. You want to send signals that give the following messages to employers:

- I am very interested in this job.
- I take pride in myself and what I do.
- I have respect for employers.
- I have a sense of purpose and direction.

Such messages are sent in the following ways:

Your appearance. Make a point of being clean, neat, well groomed, and appropriately dressed. Dress conservatively. Don't wear trendy or dramatic clothes to the interview. Give employers the impression that you are a serious, responsible, and respectful person. Your clothes can say a lot about your attitude and behavior.

The job application. Complete the job application neatly and accurately. Make sure you know (or have with you) any information the employer might request, such as your Social Security number or references. Have with you an erasable ink pen. Then if you make a mistake, you will be able to correct it neatly. Leave no blank spaces on the application. If something doesn't apply to you, such as military experience, write "N/A" in the blank (not applicable). Take your time. Proofread the application when you are finished.

The resume. Prepare a resume that you can attach to every job application. A resume is another way to "advertise" your good qualities—your honors, achievements, special skills, and good character. If you don't know how to prepare a resume, ask your instructor for help.

The interview. Try to express a good attitude during the interview. One way is to ask questions about the job and company. This shows you are interested in working for the employer. Be positive in all you say. For example, ask, "What are the hours that you expect me to work?" or "Are there opportunities to work extra hours?" Avoid questions that may signal a negative attitude, such as, "Do I have to work on Saturdays?" Your facial expression, tone of voice, and posture should reflect a positive attitude also.

"Impress me."

The follow-up. Phone the employer after the interview to show your interest. Make your call brief, to the point, and pleasant. Thank the employer for the chance to interview. Say that you are very interested in the job. This reminds the employer of you and confirms your interest in the job. It could give you an advantage over other applicants.

Employers Say . . .

"Convince me that you can do the job."

Other items that employers ranked high relate to your ability to do the job. Employers want evidence of your ability. You can give them that evidence by mentioning these points.

References. If you have worked before and your supervisor thought well of you, say so. Suggest that the employer call your past supervisor to learn about your performance on the job. Make sure you ask the supervisor's permission to use his or her name before you do. Also, know the addresses and phone numbers of any references you will use. You will need to give this information to the employer.

Training. If you have had some training specific to the job, tell the employer about it. Explain where you got the training and exactly what that training involved. Mention the kinds of equipment you used. Job training works in your favor, especially if you have no experience. It may signal to an employer that you know the demands and conditions of the industry and have a real interest in working there.

Education. Explain how the courses you have taken relate to the job you are seeking. Employers want to see the relationship of your education to the jobs they are trying to fill. If you have been involved in any work-study programs, mention them.

Work experience. Indicate all types of work experience—paid and nonpaid. The important thing you are trying to convey is that you can do the job. Every job requires planning, effort, and skill. Explain the work you have done. Describe the tasks involved and the skills you have developed through your efforts.

Good grades. Grades are a reflection of what you can do. Employers want to know that you have the basic skills required to work—reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and so forth. Your grades reflect your abilities in these areas. Many employers did not put grades at the top of the list. However, don't conclude that grades are unimportant. In fact, poor grades can have a very negative effect on employers' decisions to hire, as you will see in the "What Works against You?" section of this booklet.

The Message

Meet with several classmates to discuss the employers' rankings. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

1. Why do you think employers ranked the items as they did?
2. How did your rankings differ from the employers' rankings?
   - Look at the items you checked on Worksheet 2. These are the items you thought would impress employers more than they did. Why do you think employers view the characteristics differently than you do? What does each of the characteristics signify to the employer?
   - Look at the items you placed an "X" after on Worksheet 2. These are the items you thought would impress employers less than they did. Why do you think employers give more importance than you do to these characteristics? What does each of the characteristics signify to the employer?
3. What other ways could you give employers good messages about you and your abilities?

The Bottom Line

Get Worksheet 3, What Employers Want, from your instructor. Read the instructions, then complete the worksheet.

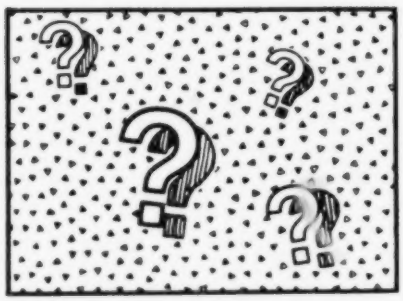
Chapter 3
What Is the Effect of Negative Information?

Objective	To determine how well you know the effect negative information has on employers' decisions to hire.
Overview	In this lesson, you will complete Worksheet 4, Getting a Job, Part B of the employer questionnaire. By doing this, you will indicate how you think employers respond to negative information. Next, you will compare your responses to the responses employers gave. Finally, you will assess your ability to estimate employers' expectations of applicants.
Worksheets	Worksheet 4, Getting a Job, Part B of the questionnaire. Worksheet 5, Employer Ratings of Negative Information.

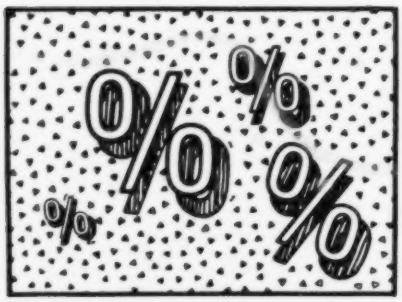
What's Your Guess?

To begin the review of the influence of negative information, you will need to complete Worksheet 4, Getting a Job, Part B of the questionnaire. Part B contains a list of facts that might work against an applicant. It is the same list that was given to the employers in the survey.

Get Worksheet 4 from your instructor. Read the directions. They explain that you are to estimate how strongly employers will react to each negative item on the list. Complete the questionnaire before you continue reading.



What Do Employers Think?



Get Worksheet 5, Employer Ratings of Negative Information, from your instructor. Read how employers responded to the same questionnaire. The numbers in each column indicate the percentage of employers who chose each response for each item. The percentage enclosed in the box is the response category *most* of the employers chose for the given item. For example, most employers (64 percent) said they would be "very negatively" affected by a person who "gave false information on the job application" (item 12).

Find the percentages that are most surprising to you. For example, were you surprised to find that *66 percent* of the employers were "not at all" negatively influenced by the person "who had never worked before"?

How Close Are You?

Are you tuned in to employers' thoughts? To find out, do the following:

1. Place Worksheet 4, Part B of your completed questionnaire, alongside Worksheet 5, showing employers' ratings.
2. Look at the category you checked for each item on Worksheet 4.
3. Find the employer percentage for each item in the column for the same category on Worksheet 5.
4. On Worksheet 5, circle the percentage in the category you checked on Worksheet 4. See the example below. It shows how you would complete item 12 if you had checked "negatively" for that item on your questionnaire.

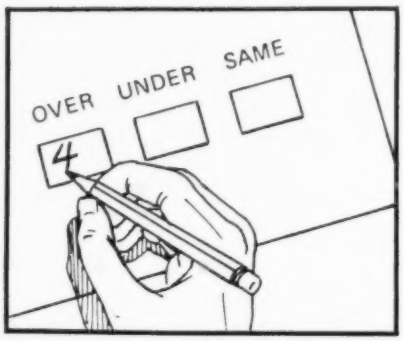
Item	Not at All	Somewhat Negatively	Negatively	Very Negatively	
Gave false information on the job application.	4%	6%	(26%)	[64%]	——

When you have circled the percentage in the corresponding category for each item, do the following on Worksheet 5:

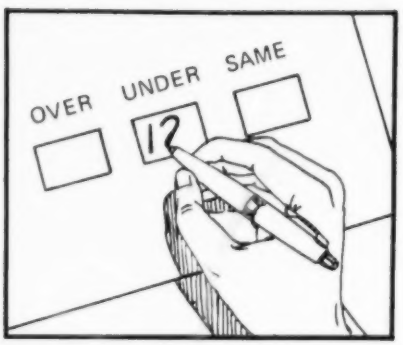
1. Find each item where your circled number was to the right of the boxed number. Place a check (✓) after that item.
2. Find each item where your circled number was to the left of the boxed number. Place an "X" after that item.
3. Find each item where your circled number was the same as the boxed number. Print an "O" after that item.

Now . . .

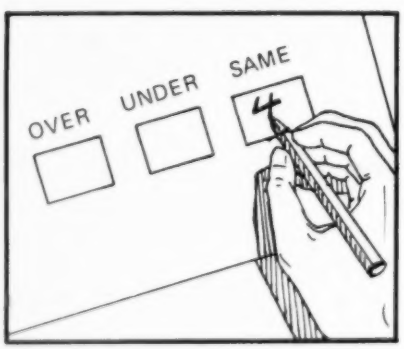
Count the number of times your circled numbers were to the right of the boxed numbers on Worksheet 5. These are the items with a check (✓). Write that number in the OVER box on the worksheet. This is the number of times you *overestimated* the influence of negative information.



Count the number of times your circled numbers were to the left of the boxed numbers on Worksheet 5. These are the items with an "X." Write that number in the UNDER box on the worksheet. This is the number of times you *underestimated* the influence of negative information.



Count the number of times your circled numbers were the same as the boxed numbers on Worksheet 5. These are the items with an "O." Write that number in the SAME box on the worksheet. This is the number of times you *correctly perceived* employers' standards.



What Does This Mean?

Is the number you wrote in the OVER box greater than four? If so, you understand that negative information influences employers against hiring. However, you are probably overestimating how much influence it can have. Try to be more positive. One bad or weak characteristic doesn't mean you will never be hired. It does mean that you should try to improve. It also means that you might be better off looking for a job that doesn't require your weakest skills.

Is the number you wrote in the UNDER box greater than four? If so, you probably don't realize the great influence negative information has on employers' decisions not to hire. This could affect your chances of getting a job. Research has shown that youth who understand that employers have tough hiring standards are more likely to stay employed. They also get the best reports from their employers in the first year of work after high school graduation.

Is the number you wrote in the SAME box greater than seven? If so, you probably have a good idea of how employers are influenced by negative information. Now, you have to try to avoid such negative behaviors.

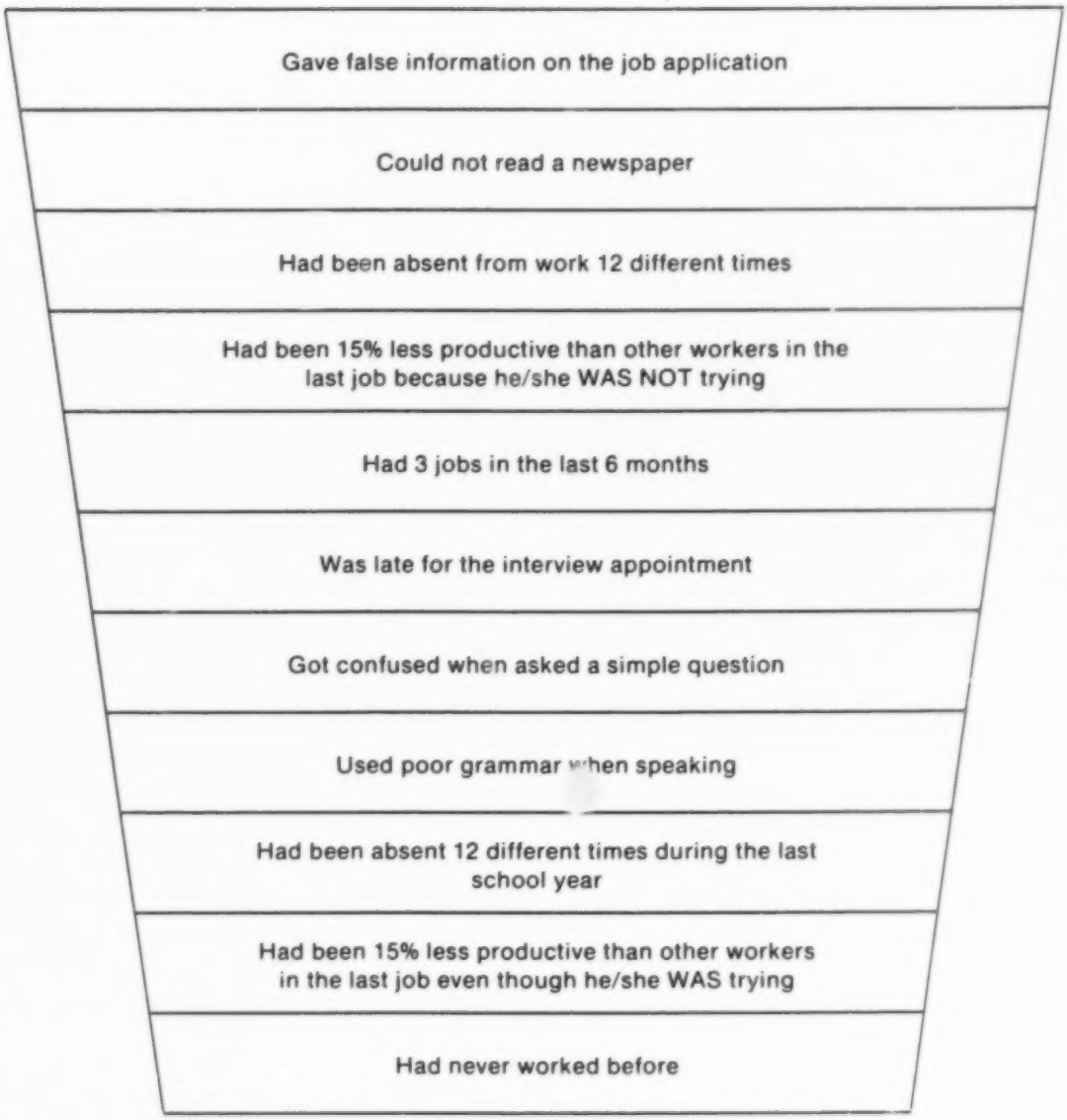
Chapter 4
What Are Employers Saying to You?

Objective	To identify characteristics employers saw as problems and ways applicants can avoid such characteristics.
Overview	In this lesson, you will review a chart that shows the order in which employers ranked the items on the questionnaire. The most negative items are at the top of the chart. The least negative are at the bottom of the chart. Then you will read an explanation of why employers responded as they did to the items on the questionnaire. Next, you will engage in a class discussion of the employers' rankings and of the characteristics employers dislike. You will also discuss ways in which applicants can avoid conveying negative information to employers.
Worksheet	Worksheet 6, What to Avoid.

On the Negative Side

The following chart shows the order in which employers ranked the negative effect of the information presented to them. The average rankings of all employers ranged from "very negatively" to "somewhat negatively."

(Very Negatively)


Gave false information on the job application
Could not read a newspaper
Had been absent from work 12 different times
Had been 15% less productive than other workers in the last job because he/she WAS NOT trying
Had 3 jobs in the last 6 months
Was late for the interview appointment
Got confused when asked a simple question
Used poor grammar when speaking
Had been absent 12 different times during the last school year
Had been 15% less productive than other workers in the last job even though he/she WAS trying
Had never worked before

(Somewhat Negatively)

Employers Say . . .

"Don't lie to me."

The employers saw all of the items on the chart as negatives for the applicant. But the behaviors at the top of the chart were viewed as the most serious problems. These behaviors would probably influence the employer against hiring. Certainly, few employers would hire someone who lied on the application. You can avoid the temptation to lie by doing the following.

Think before you answer a question. What are employers seeking when they ask, "Why do you want the job?" Many of them are asking, "Are you serious about working?" "Will you like the work?" "Will you work hard?" "Will you stay with the job or will you quit soon?" Employers don't want to know very personal facts about you or your family. Just answer the question briefly and honestly.

Know you have value. Put yourself in the best light. For example, you might want a job so you can save money for a car. You might be applying for a job at a specific sporting goods store because it is near your home and you won't have to fight the downtown traffic. Also, you might like selling merchandise and working with people. If so, tell the employer all those facts, not just one of them. Don't say, "I hate driving in traffic, so I am applying here." That is not very positive, nor is it totally true. Instead, say, "I want to earn money to save for a car. I chose your store because it is convenient to my home, and I know I would enjoy selling the merchandise and working with people." Don't be tempted to lie to impress the employer. Don't say, "I know all about camping gear," if you don't. The employer will soon find out! Employers don't expect you to know everything, so don't feel you have to be more than you are.

Be positive when describing yourself and your efforts. If you do have to explain a problem in your background, do it in a positive way. For example, suppose the employer asks you to explain why you have been out of work for 6 months. Don't tell the employer that you have been waiting for the right job to come along since you were laid off. This might lead an employer to think that you sat at home watching television, waiting for a job. Instead, tell the employer if you have been applying for jobs. Mention specific things you have done during unemployment, such as taking a course at a high school. Your answer should show that you are industrious, conscientious, and serious about your future. If the employer asks you if you have been convicted of a major crime, answer truthfully. These facts are easy to trace. However, be positive by pointing out the lesson you have learned. Explain your goal to begin a new pattern of life.

Employers Say . . .

"Know the 3 Rs."

Many of the employers are not overly impressed with high grades. However, they are turned off by a lack of competence in the basic skills. That is why it is important to show employers that you can read, write, and speak correctly.

Use the basic skills you've learned. Write carefully, spell correctly, and give appropriate answers to questions on the job application. During the interview, use good grammar and pronounce words carefully so that you are easily understood.

Avoid phrases such as "you know" and the slang that is currently popular with your friends. Also, listen carefully to the questions so you can answer them correctly.

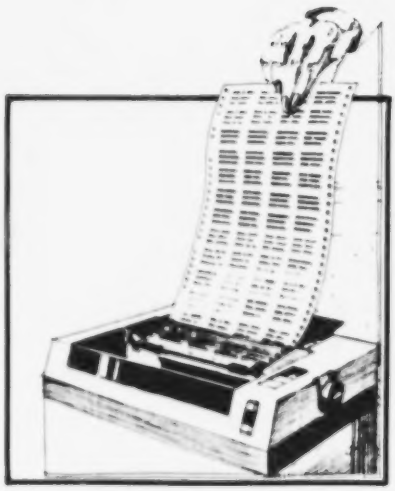
Learn the basic skills you're lacking. As you can see by the chart, employers would most likely not hire someone who could not read a newspaper. If you lack good reading skills, get busy. The basic skills are not difficult to learn if you try. Ask your teacher or guidance counselor for help if you are in high school.

If you are out of school, sign up for an evening course at the high school or find out other courses that are available in your community. Although language is not always a sign of ability, many employers think it is. If you speak a language other than English, learn English too. It is the language you will need on the job. And, don't drop out of school. You reduce your chances for getting hired.

Employers Say . . .

"Give me proof of your worth."

Employers want facts about your past. They use these facts to predict how you will perform in the future. You can gather good facts about yourself in the following ways.



Maintain good school and work records. Employers look at school records and work records to find out the kind of worker you will most likely be. High absenteeism, frequent tardiness, gaps in employment, and job hopping signal to employers that you might not be a reliable and dependable worker. Anything that shows you will not put forth effort will be a problem, too. Employers are concerned about productivity, but they are more troubled about low productivity if they think you will not try!

The best thing you can do is avoid practices that will appear as negatives on your record. If you do have a questionable item on your record, be prepared to discuss it. Give a good explanation for the behavior. If you don't have a good explanation, you might tell the employer that your attitude has changed.

As you can see from the chart, employers are not overly concerned if a person has never worked. Most employers won't hold this against you. They are much more concerned about whether you are willing to work hard, follow the rules, and have a good attitude about work. Keep this in mind while you are in high school. A good high school record can signal that you have these qualities.

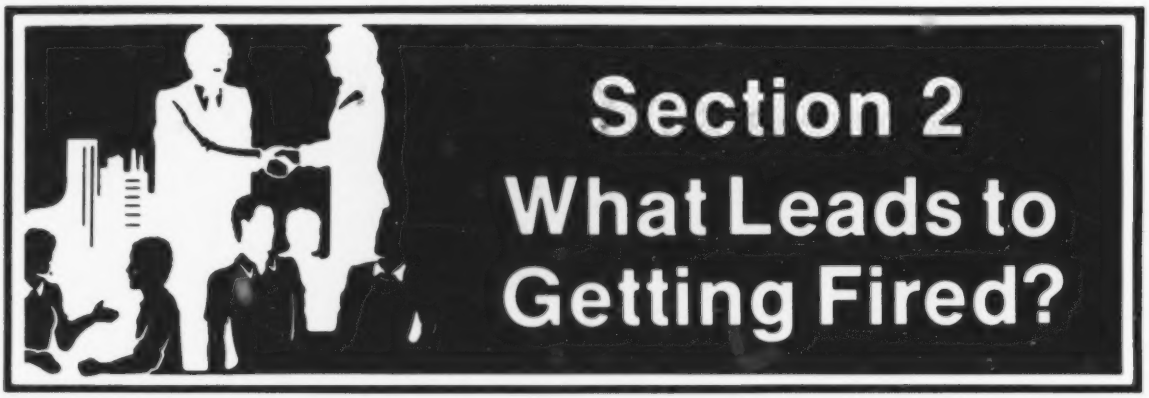
The Message

Meet with several classmates to discuss the employers' rankings. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

1. Why do you think employers ranked the items as they did?
2. How did your rankings differ from the employers' rankings?
   - Look at the items you checked on Worksheet 5. These are the items you thought would offend employers more than they did. Why do you think employers view the characteristics differently from you?
   - Look at the items you placed an "X" after on Worksheet 5. These are the items you thought would not offend employers as much as they did. Why do you think employers view these characteristics more negatively than you do?
3. In what ways could you avoid giving negative messages about yourself and your abilities?

The Bottom Line

Get Worksheet 6, What to Avoid, from your instructor. Read the instructions, then complete the worksheet.

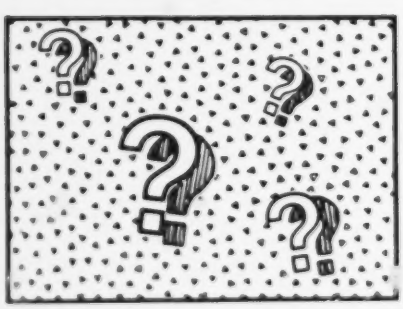


Section 2
What Leads to Getting Fired?

Chapter 5
What Is the Effect of Negative Job Performance?

Objective	To determine how well you know employers' reactions to workers whose attitudes and behaviors interfere with job performance.
Overview	In this lesson, you will complete Worksheet 7, Keeping a Job, Part C of the employer questionnaire. By doing this, you will indicate how you think employers respond to poor job performance. Next, you will compare your responses to the responses employers gave. Finally, you will assess your ability to estimate employers' expectations of applicants.
Worksheets	Worksheet 7, Keeping a Job, Part C of the questionnaire. Worksheet 8, Employer Ratings of Negative Job Performance.

What's Your Guess?



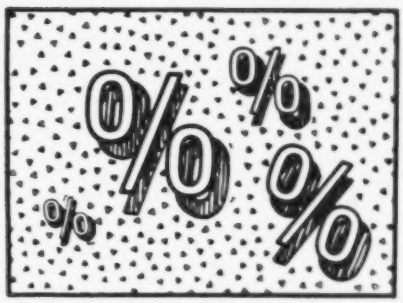
To begin this review, you will need to complete Worksheet 7, Keeping a Job, Part C of the questionnaire. Part C contains a list of information about a worker's job performance that could have a negative influence on an employer's assessment of that

worker. The list is the same one that was given to employers in the survey.

Get Worksheet 7 from your instructor. Read the directions. They explain that you are to mark how you think employers are influenced by each item on the list.

Complete the questionnaire before you continue reading.

What Do Employers Think?



Get Worksheet 8, Employer Ratings of Negative Job Performance, from your instructor. Read how employers responded to the same questionnaire. The numbers in each column show the percentage of employers who chose each response for each item. The percentage enclosed in the box is the response category *most* of the employers chose for the given item. For example, most of the employers (49%) said they would "warn the worker" who "didn't call in when sick" (item 1).

Find the percentages that are most surprising to you. For example, were you surprised to find that *33 percent* of the employers would "fire the worker immediately" if the worker "put more hours on the time sheet than actually worked"?

How Close Are You?

Are you tuned in to employers' thoughts? To find out, do the following:

1. Place Worksheet 7, Part C of your completed questionnaire, alongside Worksheet 8, showing the employers' ratings.
2. Look at the category you checked for each item on Worksheet 7.
3. Find the employer percentage for each item in the column for the same category on Worksheet 8.
4. On Worksheet 8, circle the percentage in the category you checked on Worksheet 7. See the example below. It shows how you would complete item 1 if you had checked "warn the worker" for that item on your questionnaire.

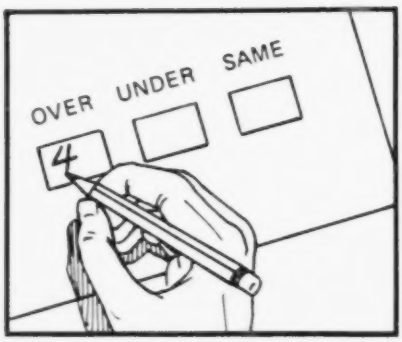
Item	Ignore It	Discuss It If It Continues	Discuss It Immediately	Warn the Worker	Suspend the Worker	Fire Worker Immediately
Didn't call in when sick	0	2	18	(49)	16	15 ____

When you have circled the percentage in the corresponding category for each item, do the following on Worksheet 8:

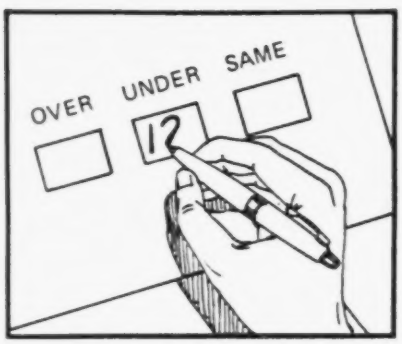
1. Find each item where your circled number was to the right of the boxed number. Place a check (✓) on the blank after that item.
2. Find each item where your circled number was to the left of the boxed number. Place an "X" on the blank after that item.
3. Find each item where your circled number was the same as the boxed number. Place an "O" on the blank after that item.

Now . . .

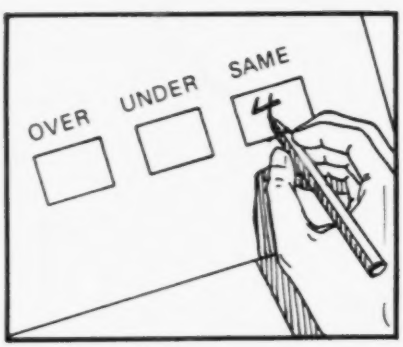
Count the number of times your circled numbers were to the right of the boxed numbers on Worksheet 8. These are the items with a check (✓). Write that number in the OVER box on the worksheet. This is the number of times you *overestimated* the influence of poor job performance.



Count the number of times your circled numbers were to the left of the boxed numbers on Worksheet 8. These are the items with an "X." Write that number in the UNDER box on the worksheet. This is the number of times you *underestimated* the influence of poor job performance.



Count the number of times your circled numbers were the same as the boxed numbers on Worksheet 8. These are the items with an "O." Write that number in the SAME box on the worksheet. This is the number of times you *correctly perceived* employers' standards.



What Does This Mean?

Is the number you wrote in the OVER box greater than six? If so, you understand the seriousness of job performance problems. However, you may be overestimating how tough employers are. Don't be discouraged if you don't do everything perfectly as long as you try.

Is the number you wrote in the UNDER box greater than six? If so, you probably don't realize how tough employers can be on new employees. This could cause you to take things less seriously. It could result in your being disciplined more harshly than you think you deserve.

Is the number you wrote in the SAME box greater than 18? If so, you probably have a good idea of how employers are influenced by poor job performance. Now, you can try to avoid such performance.

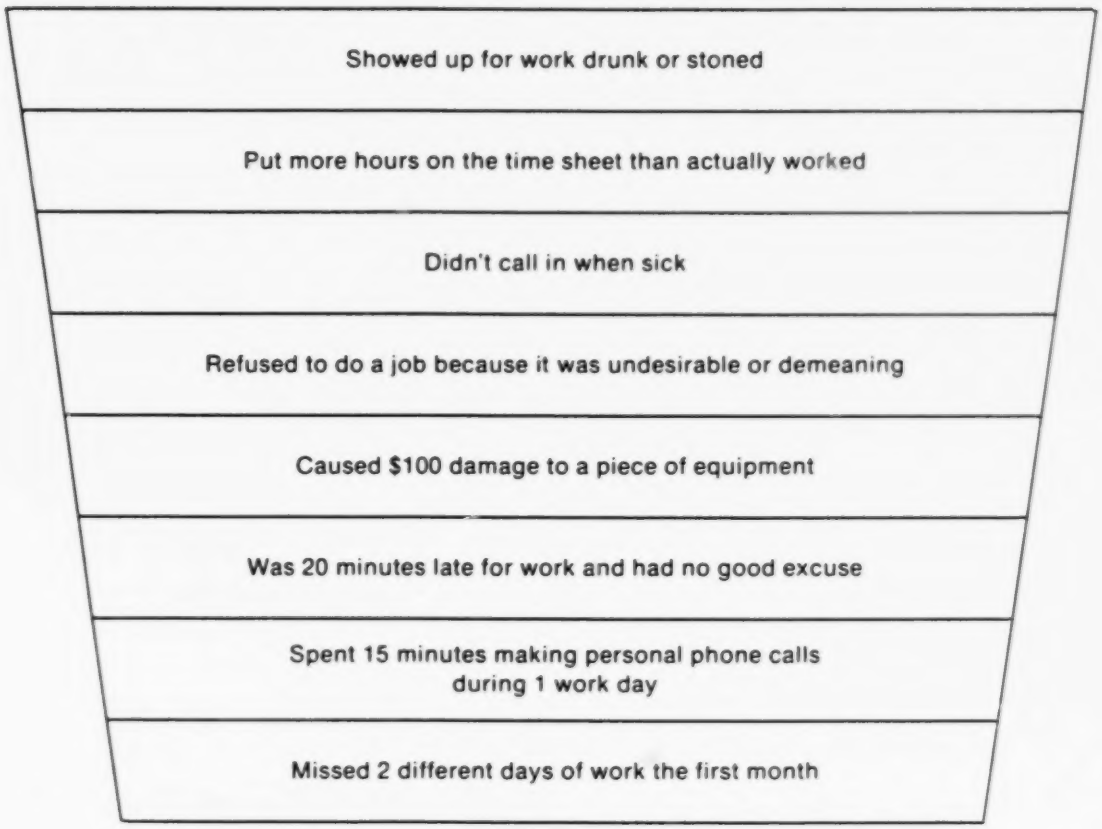
Chapter 6
What Are Employers Saying to You?

Objective	To identify attitudes and behaviors that most offend employers and ways you can guide your performance on the job to decrease the risk of being fired.
Overview	In this lesson, you will review charts that show the order in which employers ranked similar items on the questionnaire. The most negative items are at the top of each chart. The least negative are at the bottom of the charts. Then, you will read an explanation of why employers responded as they did to the items on the questionnaire. Next, you will engage in a class discussion of the employers' rankings and of the attitudes and behaviors employers find most offensive. You will also discuss ways in which applicants can guide their performance to reduce their chances of getting fired.
Worksheet	Worksheet 9, What Employers Expect.

About Following Orders and Company Rules

How tough were employers on problems related to *following orders and company rules*? The following chart shows the order in which employers ranked the negative effect of the problems presented to them. The average rankings of employers ranged from "fire the worker immediately" to "discuss it immediately."

(Fire the Worker Immediately)


Showed up for work drunk or stoned
Put more hours on the time sheet than actually worked
Didn't call in when sick
Refused to do a job because it was undesirable or demeaning
Caused $100 damage to a piece of equipment
Was 20 minutes late for work and had no good excuse
Spent 15 minutes making personal phone calls during 1 work day
Missed 2 different days of work the first month

(Discuss It Immediately)

Employers Say . . .

"Know company rules and policies."

Look at the chart. It shows that employers were toughest on employees who did not follow company rules—behavior that would most likely get them fired. Therefore, be careful—especially the first few weeks on the job, as employers will no doubt be watching you closely. Try following these simple rules.

Work responsibly and independently. Employers will be looking to see if you can be trusted to do your tasks without a lot of supervision. You can show employers that you are trustworthy by knowing the company's rules and policies. Learn them immediately. The most important ones are usually made clear to you at the beginning of your employment. Don't forget them. Know the informal rules, too. Keep your eyes and ears open, and talk with your co-workers since they are the best source for this kind of information.

Be scrupulously honest about your work hours. If you want to be paid for 8 hours, you must work 8 hours! This means doing the work you were hired to do, not just being there. It also means sticking to the work hours you are scheduled to work.

Never use alcohol or drugs on the job. Employers want alert, careful employees. If you use alcohol or drugs before you report for work, your job performance will suffer.

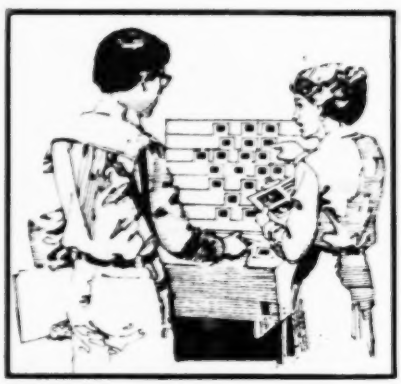
Call in whenever you are not going to be on time for work. If you are sick or running late, it is best to call. Don't just arrive late, hoping that no one will notice. They will. Your absence could cause problems for an employer who is counting on you to be on the job.

Employers Say . . .

"Give me your full attention and effort."

Employers expect your undivided attention. Work is not the place to mull over your personal problems. It is the place to concentrate on what you are to do.

Carry out orders quickly and correctly. If you are new, everyone will be aware of that fact. If you do your share of the work and if you give your full effort, the word will get around. Your co-workers and supervisors will be glad to have you on their team.



Do what your employer asks you to do. You might not like all the tasks you are given. You may even think you are getting the worst tasks. Maybe you are! But after you prove yourself, you will probably get assigned to different tasks. The important thing is to do your job well. Then, if you choose to leave the job, you will have good references.

Pay attention to what you are doing. Take care of the equipment and tools you use. Repairs and replacements cut into profits. If you cause such a loss due to negligence or ignorance, you could lose your job. Make sure you know what you are doing. Read the manuals. Watch the pros. Maintain the equipment as if it was your own.

About Productivity and Effort

How strongly did employers react to problems related to *productivity and effort*? The chart on the next page shows the order in which employers ranked the problems presented to them. For example, the top item on the chart had a very strong negative effect on employers. The average response of all the employers to this item was "fire the worker immediately." Responses to the remaining four items ranged from "warn the worker" to "discuss it if it continues."

(Fire the Worker Immediately)

Didn't try and was 15% less productive than other workers who had the same training

(Warn the Worker)

Took an additional hour of "break time" but finished assigned work anyway

Needed twice as much supervision as others

Finished assigned work but didn't report back to the boss for more work

Tried but was 15% less productive than other workers who had the same training

Seemed not to be trying, but was no less productive than other workers

(Discuss It If It Continues)

Employers Say . . . "Try!"

Put forth your best effort. Next to not following the rules, low productivity caused by low effort is most likely to get you fired. Therefore, put forth your best effort! Employers seem to be *more* tolerant of low productivity if the worker is making a sincere effort. Employers know that the productivity of a person who is making an effort will most likely improve. However, the productivity of a person who isn't trying has nowhere to go but down.

Employers Say . . . "Stick to the task."

All employers are concerned about productivity. They cannot afford to keep an employee who takes twice as long as any other worker to do a job. Following are some steps you can take to ensure productivity.

Always put forth your best effort. Don't wait until your employer is present to work hard. Work hard because of the pride you have in yourself. Do what you are asked to do, then give another 10 percent. Most successful workers do more than they have to do. Eventually, they are *rewarded*.

Stay at your job. Never leave your work for more than your allotted break time. Work through a break occasionally. Your employer will be impressed to see that you are absorbed in your work.

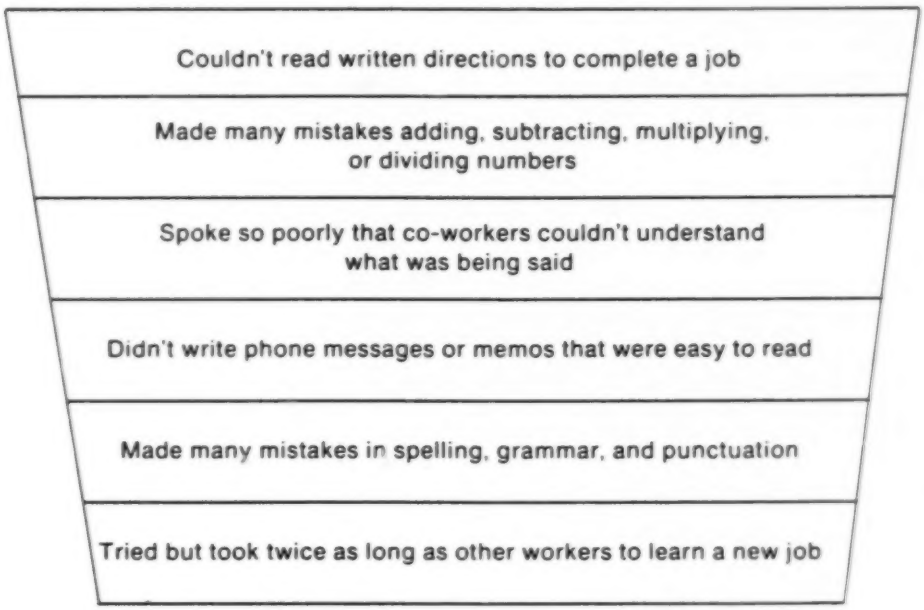
Show initiative. Don't always wait to be told what to do.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you are not sure what you are supposed to do, ask! It shows you are diligent. Also, by asking questions beforehand, there is less chance of wasting time and effort by doing the wrong thing.

About Basic Skills

How tough were employers on problems related to *basic skills*? The chart below shows the order in which employers ranked the problems presented to them. The average rankings of employers were in the "discuss it immediately" category.

(Discuss It Immediately)


Couldn't read written directions to complete a job
Made many mistakes adding, subtracting, multiplying, or dividing numbers
Spoke so poorly that co-workers couldn't understand what was being said
Didn't write phone messages or memos that were easy to read
Made many mistakes in spelling, grammar, and punctuation
Tried but took twice as long as other workers to learn a new job

(Discuss it Immediately)

Employers Say . . .

"Try not to make mistakes."

Employers considered all problems related to basic skills serious enough to discuss immediately. These problems may not get you fired at first, but employers will not tolerate them for long.

Here are some ways you can avoid on-the-job problems with basic skills.

Check any math you do carefully. Mistakes can mean profit losses and time losses. Until you are very secure in your job, it is best to check and recheck your work.

Any reading associated with your job should be done carefully. Mistakes cost money. Be sure you understand what you read.

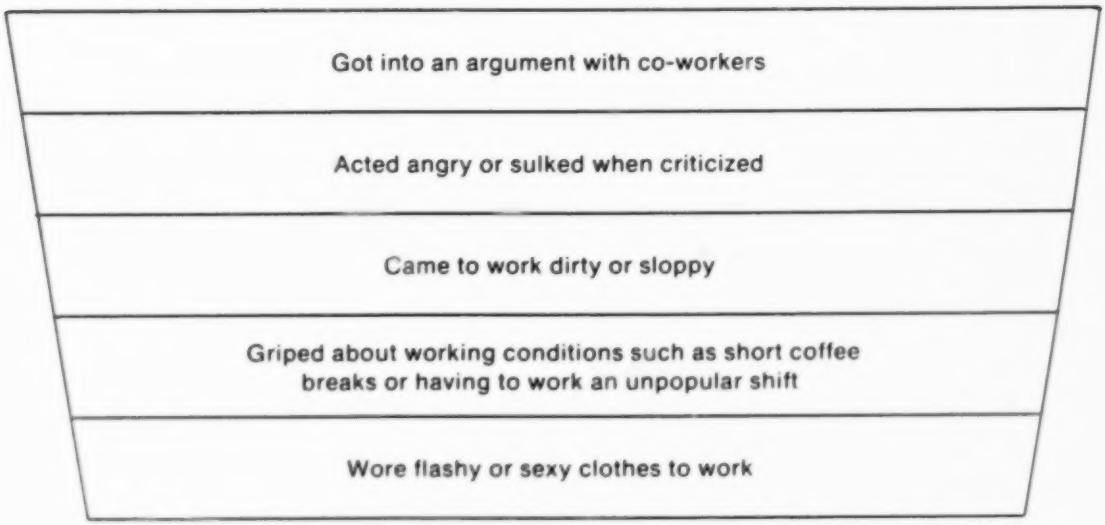
Take a few extra minutes to collect your thoughts so you can communicate clearly. Write simple, clear, messages if writing is connected with your job. Speak in a way that people can easily understand. Clear communication with co-workers ensures better results. Clear communication with customers contributes to the company's reputation and business.

Listen carefully to instructions. Take notes to help you remember the instructions. Then you won't have to ask your supervisor to repeat them. Ask questions if the instructions are not clear. Learn from your mistakes.

About Attitude and Appearance

How tough were employers on problems related to *attitudes and appearance*? The chart on the next page shows the order in which employers ranked the problems presented to them. The average rankings of employers ranged from "warn the worker" to "discuss it immediately."

(Warn the Worker)


Got into an argument with co-workers
Acted angry or sulked when criticized
Came to work dirty or sloppy
Griped about working conditions such as short coffee breaks or having to work an unpopular shift
Wore flashy or sexy clothes to work

(Discuss It Immediately)

Employers Say . . .

"Have a good attitude."

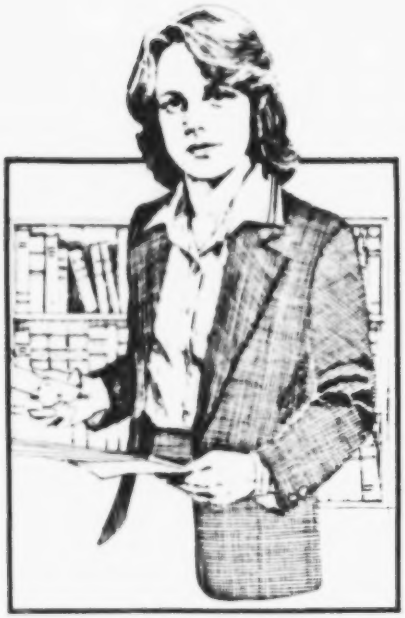
Employers considered attitude problems serious enough to discuss immediately with employees. At least in the beginning, employers will be somewhat tolerant. But, don't get the idea that bad attitudes will be tolerated over time. Here are some ways to avoid attitude problems.

Look for the best in people and in situations. Try to find something good to think and say about each person with whom you work. Find the parts of your job that you enjoy. By concentrating on the positive rather than on the negative things, you will be a happier person and a better worker.

Handle any complaints calmly and in a straightforward manner. You might wait a few days before you mention a complaint. Maybe things will get better. The wait will keep you from overreacting due to the stress of the day. If there is a problem, discuss it openly with the person(s) involved. Don't talk behind a person's back. When you speak, state facts, not emotions. Be careful that you don't become a chronic complainer. If you do, your co-workers will complain about you!

Employers Say . . .

"Take care with your work appearance."



The way you groom and dress yourself affects people around you. Employers expect their employees to be well groomed and to dress properly for the job. If you don't, your co-workers may not want to associate with you. Certainly customers won't want to deal with you. Here are things you can do to present a good image.

Practice good hygiene. Bathe or shower every day. Use deodorant. Brush and floss your teeth. Wear clean clothing.

Dress the way the majority of your co-workers dress. This doesn't mean that you need to be a carbon copy of another worker. However, wearing noticeably different clothing can call unfavorable attention to you. If your job doesn't require a uniform, then wear business-like clothing. This means dress to do the job you were hired to do. Remember, your clothing can be an expression of your personality and attitude within the work setting. Make sure yours is sending the right message.

The Message

Meet with several classmates to discuss the employer rankings. Use the following questions to guide the discussion:

1. Why do you think employers ranked the items as they did?
2. How did your rankings differ from the employers' rankings?
   - Look at the items you checked on Worksheet 8. These are the items you thought would offend employers more than they did. Why do you think employers view the characteristics differently from you?
   - Look at the items you placed an "X" after on Worksheet 8. These are the items you thought would not offend employers as much as they did. Why do you think employers view these characteristics more negatively than you do?
3. In what ways could you avoid giving negative messages about yourself and your abilities?

The Bottom Line

Get Worksheet 9, What Employers Expect, from your instructor. Read the instructions, then complete the worksheet.

Section 3
How Can You Meet Employers' Standards?

Chapter 7
What Are Your Best Chances for Getting and Keeping a Job?

Objective	To determine where you stand in the employers' eyes and what you can do to improve your position.
Overview	In this lesson, you will complete a worksheet to assess your work competencies. You will identify your own strengths and weaknesses. Next, you will identify those skills that are most important for you to work on—the skills employers will be looking for when they consider you for a job. Finally, you will identify the steps you must take to develop the skills employers are seeking.
Worksheets	Worksheet 10, Rating Sheet.

What Are Your Strengths and Weaknesses?

The purpose of this section is to help improve your ability to get and keep jobs. To begin, get Worksheet 10, the Rating Sheet, from you instructor. Read and follow the directions on the worksheet. Complete the worksheet before you continue reading.

What Skills Do You Need to Develop?

Review the rating you gave for each item. Think about the skills or behaviors that impress employers. Are those your best skills? Are they your weakest skills?

Read each item again. List those skills you should work on, which are—

- the skills you rated a 1, 2, or 3;
- the skills that influence employers most positively.

In a separate column, list those skills for which you gave yourself a 4 or 5 rating. Keep these skills in mind, too. You will want to let employers know that you are competent in these areas.

What's Your Plan of Action?

Look at the first group of items you listed. Although these are your weakest areas, don't view them as problems. They are merely areas in which you can improve. The survey showed that many employers will forgive past mistakes or behaviors. Therefore, it is the present that counts.

To begin your improvement process, list on a separate sheet of paper the five skills you think you should develop first. List those skills that will give you the greatest advantage with employers and those you have the best chance of improving quickly. Keep your plan simple and realistic. Don't try to correct too much at one time. When you have improved in the first five areas, you can work on five more.

Now, look at the first skill you listed. Under that skill, list three reasons why you are unable to perform the skill well. For example, assume you listed, "I can dress properly for a job interview," as a skill you don't have. Under that item, you might list the following points:

1. I don't know what type of clothes are appropriate.
2. I don't have much money to spend on clothes.
3. I don't know what clothing styles look best on me.

Next, think of ways to resolve each of the points you listed. Ask your friends, family, and even your teacher or guidance counselor for their opinions, too. Open your mind to every possible way to resolve the points. Write down all the ideas you get. Do this for each of the points you listed. Here are some ideas to begin your list for dealing with the first point.

Problem: I don't know what type of clothes are appropriate.

Solution:

- Walk into the lobbies, reception rooms, or entrances to several businesses. Choose businesses like the one where you would like to work. Notice what the employees are wearing. Take notes about the styles, colors, and choices of clothing.
- Buy several magazines that show what people are wearing today. Many of the advertisements show people in their work settings. Notice the type of clothing the models in these ads are wearing.
- Talk with your guidance counselor, parent, or with an employee at a store where you shop. Ask what they consider appropriate for the interview.
- Talk with a sales person at a clothing store. Describe the kind of job you want. Ask to see clothes that would be appropriate for an interview for such a job.

There are many more suggestions you could add to this list. It is fun to see how many ideas you can come up with. Also, as you add to the list, you will see that there are many ways you can develop skills in the areas you listed.

Now, look at the next skill you listed. Repeat the same process for this and the remaining three skills on your list. When you are finished, you will have a plan for developing each of the five skills you listed.

Use the plan! Think of it as a work list. Try some (or all) of the solutions you listed. Give yourself a realistic amount of time to work on each suggestion, but don't allow too much time. Start today to prepare yourself to meet employer standards.

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